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LET'S EXPLORE---

The Ramapos and 'Skyline Drive'



Thousands of acres of forestland stretch out as far as eye can see from this vantage point looking south from "Skyway." Roadside boulders provide makeshift seats for viewers.

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

RANGING northward from Oakland are the Ramapo Mountains, with rugged forests in which are locked the secrets of two centuries. Few have ventured up the rugged slopes. It has been a haven for the oppressed, a cloak for secret dealings during the Revolutionary War, a game-packed woodland for hunters and trappers. Rattlesnake fanciers come in the Summer and a few huge estates stretch through the mountains, but until now the heart of the Ramapos has been no place for a Sunday drive.

Today, however, the Ramapos are pierced by a broad new road. Started in 1940 when 500 WPA workmen started blasting through the boulder-covered mountains, the Oakland-Ringwood "Skyway" was completed for general traffic only a few days ago. All of last Summer and most of this Spring it has been occasionally used, but only by people seeking a quick route from Oakland to Ringwood or by infrequent drivers who have heard of its unequalled scenic splendors. This is New Jersey's newest road; the driver who takes it today will join the few who can boast of having seen the Ramapos in closeup.

The mere building of a road won't reveal the mountain's secrets, of course. Historians have for so long passed by the area that tangled fact

and legend appear first as indisputable truth, then disappear in the mistiness of old wives' tales. However, the road does make available to everyone sights which once belonged to a select few.

These eight miles of road will some day be part of the highway from the Ramapos to the George Washington Bridge. Less than an hour from Newark, it is a conclusive answer to the motorists' question: "How can I prove New Jersey is more than a four-lane concrete highway rushing from border to border?" The mountains have grudgingly yielded the road beyond which the quiet wilderness stretches away, just as it has for centuries.

SOME DAY the road may be four-laned and concrete, replete with neon lights. Today, however, it is just the broad base for the future. The portion up the Eastern slope is hard pavement, but near the top and down the Western side to Wanaque Reservoir it is sealing oil over hard rock and dirt. It will permit no speeding, but then the constantly changing scenes would slow down all but the most view-hardened.

From Upper Mountain avenue in Montclair, off Bloomfield avenue just opposite Montclair Academy, the Ramapos are only slightly more than a half hour away through Great

Notch, Little Falls, Pompton Lakes and Oakland. From the start the route is a temptation to explore New Jersey: Spacious homes set far back along Mountain avenue lead into farm lands, then into hill country near Preakness.

The road winds naturally toward Little Falls and the traveler will encounter no difficulty if he scrupulously avoids "Paterson" signs to the right. In Little Falls, at the traffic light near the mills, a right turn crosses the bridge over the swiftly flowing falls from which the town derives its name. Just past the bridge turn left for the newly-completed overpass over Route 6.

Follow signs leading to Packanack Lake until Alps road is reached at the top of the hill, where a ride along the ridge gives enticing glimpses of the "different" Jersey as mountains far in the background frame the tree-covered valley below. Alps road leads to a "T" intersection, with a large rock cluster forming the "T." State Police recommend the road around the rock to the right for easy access to the Hamburg Turnpike, a mile beyond.

A RIGHT TURN in Pompton Lakes into Route 202, just before the picturesque falls are reached, leads northward along the lake. The estate of the late Albert Payson Terhune, author of books on dogs, lies on the

highway, with his home to the left near the lake. The training camp where Joe Louis has been preparing to defend his heavyweight title is in Lakeside avenue, to the left where a concrete bridge crosses the lake.

Oakland, north on 202, was once the religious center and for a short time county seat of Bergen County. Religious interest centered there when the Pond Dutch Reformed Church was built in 1710. The borough was then called Ponds; huge oaks leave no question as to how the town derived its present name.

In Oakland be sure to take a sharp left turn just over the railroad tracks—on the concrete road paralleling the tracks—and watch for the bridge over the Ramapo River. Just beyond this bridge turn right on the macadam road almost hidden by trees. The climb to the Ramapos starts here, past the sign which proclaims the road to be Route S4B, "the express George Washington Bridge."

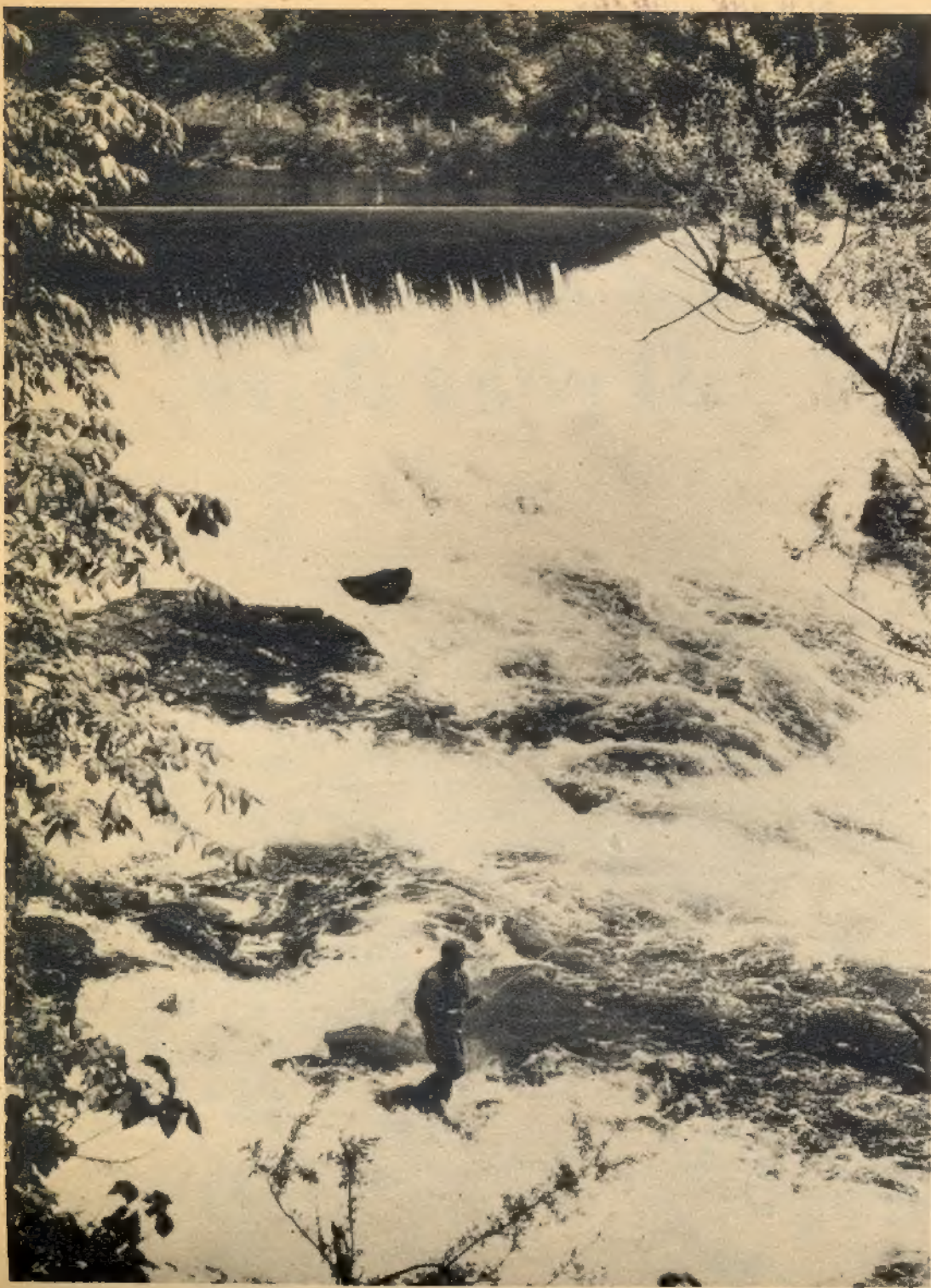
Great oak trees shade rocky glens where wild flowers spread rampantly over areas untouched by humans. Solid stone ledges and huge boulders in the forests make it easy to believe that outcasts could find here the peace and isolation they sought. Smooth rocks look like ideal picnic spots but let the autoist beware: This

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ABOVE: Pompton's picturesque falls as seen from Route 202. Braving the turbulent waters is fisherman seen in center foreground.

BELOW: Rocky ledge jutting up from the roadside shows type of country through which the Oakland-Ringwood "Skyway" was blasted.



Swing Around Northeast J

(Continued from Preceding Page)

region has not falsely earned its reputation for its rattlesnakes.

THE smooth macadam is Oakland's share in the road. Just as this ends a stop for a look back to the southeast reveals on a clear day the skyline of New York City etched clearly against the sky. If the afternoon is quiet the stop may bring further rewards—deer frequently can be seen frolicking among the boulders or occasionally a woodchuck will amble across the road.

Each twist in the road changes the scenic panorama, ranging from rocky cliffs rising sharply upward to sudden drops away from the highway into the valley, permitting faraway glimpses of sheets of water and the distant mountains of West Jersey. The broadness of the road bed allows parking and hours can be spent along the road picking out familiar landmarks far out through the valley.

At several places along the route wood roads intersect. One of these is the legendary Cannonball road of Revolutionary War days, over which supplies were lugged in great secrecy and under great hazards. WPA workmen found traces of the roadbed,

some of it still corduroyed by logs thrown across muddy spots when it was cut through around 1776.

OVER the mountain the road slants downward and northward toward Wanaque Reservoir and Erskine Lake. A right turn at the intersection with the highway along the reservoir goes up to Ringwood Manor State Park, historic site of pre-Revolutionary War iron works. The road past the park leads back again into the Ramapos, at Sloatsburg, N. Y., where busy Route 17 finds its way through a valley along the river. Stay on 17 to the traffic circle, then turn right for Allendale and Waldwick.

The story of the Jackson Whites is everywhere in the Ramapos. Attempts to find their true origin run into contradictory legends and stories, and any version is likely to find dissenters. These shy people are a unique sociological group, formed by a union after the Revolution of Hessian German woodcutters, soldiers, women from the West Indies and Tuscarora Indians. They have found in the Ramapos the isolation they sought in the 18th century and have lived there more than 150 years, intermarrying and seldom leaving the area.





Sightseers stroll along broad roadway on west slope of the Ramapos. Partly visible in left background is section of the Wanaque Reservoir.

Jersey Opens Up New Vistas

Southward from Route 17 the encroachments of residential demands on the once heavily-farmed Saddle River Valley are obvious. Some large farms still spread over the region, which has been farmed since before 1700. British and American troops stored the area for food during the Revolution and during the Civil War tales were told of turnips weighing 11 pounds and of celery three feet long.

IN HO-HO-KUS (or Hohokus, depending on whether you hyphenate or not, and varied usage on town buildings makes either seem correct) the "Hermitage" is on the right behind a stone wall, just after the town line is crossed. Still occupied as a residence, the red sandstone structure with its steep roof and oddly-shaped dormers was named for its builder, Captain Philip De Visne, known as the Hermit. It was in the "Hermitage" that Aaron Burr courted and won Theodosia Prevost, a widow.

An easy direct route from Ho-Ho-Kus to Route 6 is entered by a right turn into Maple avenue at the traffic light in the center of the town. Maple avenue runs all the way south through Ridgewood and Glen Rock to the Pas-

saic River at Paterson, where it joins River drive and completely avoids the confusion of Paterson.

Maple avenue skirts the edge of Glen Rock, but at the traffic light intersection with Rock road a right turn for a half-mile will give the motorists a recommended view of a 20-ton rock. The "rock in the glen," after which the town was named, once served as a center of Indian ceremonials and in recent years dictated the direction of streets in the area. The 15-foot high boulder, presumably deposited by a glacier when it began its slow retreat from New Jersey, is now a war memorial.

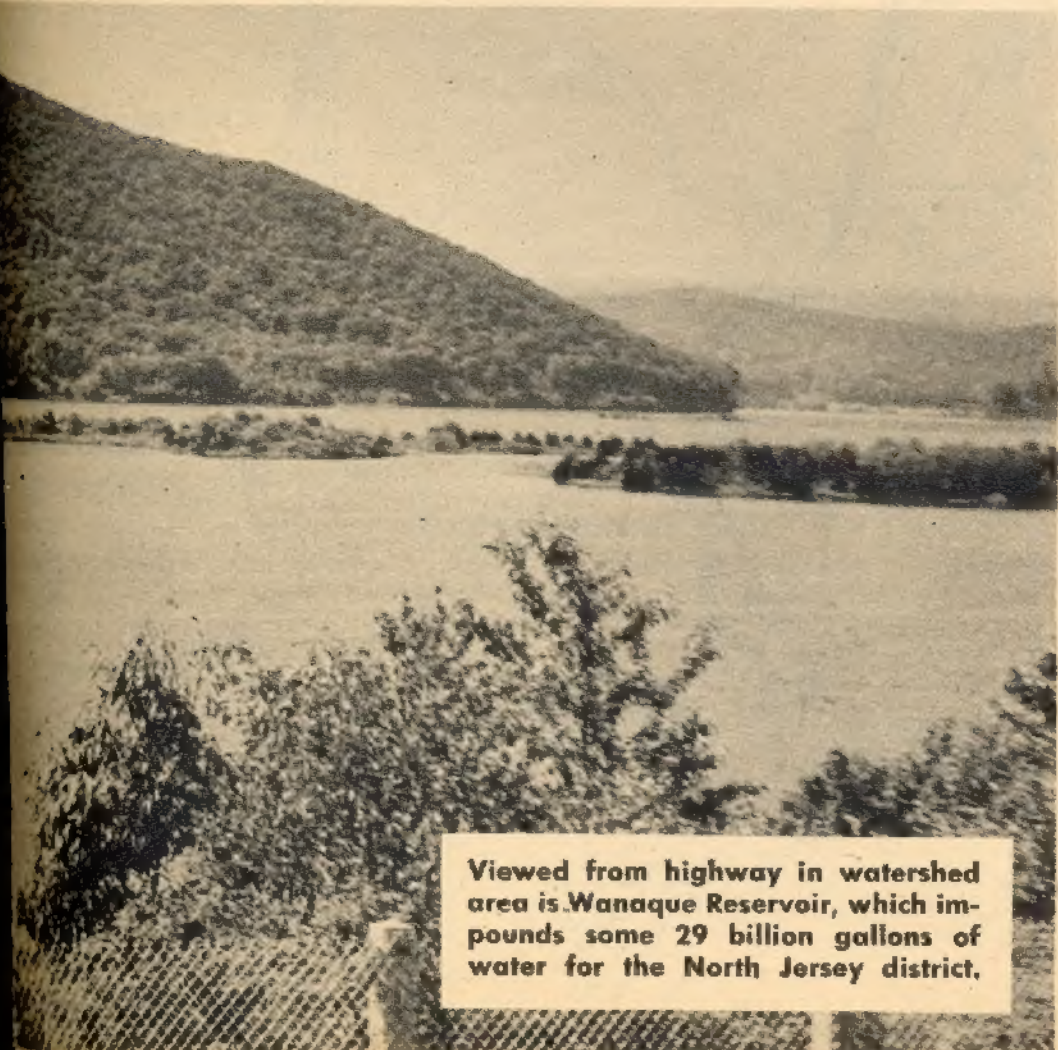
Back in Maple avenue, a few miles southward is the intersection with River drive. The driver must watch carefully for the left turn before the bridge to avoid entering Paterson's traffic. River drive leads through Fairlawn, where dairy farms offer a startling contrast with industrial Paterson across the river, along the unsuspected quiet of the Passaic River. Just beyond East Paterson, River road offers easy access to Route 6 near Clifton and a quick trip back to Montclair along Valley road.

(Turn Page for Additional Pictures and Map of Area.)



ABOVE: Another panorama from "skyline" shows grove of three skeletons. Lower end of Wanaque Reservoir may be seen in background.

BELOW: Little Falls, after which town was named, rush through gorge under bridge near which is newly finished Route 6 overpass.



Viewed from highway in watershed area is Wanaque Reservoir, which impounds some 29 billion gallons of water for the North Jersey district.

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Ramapos and 'Skyline Drive'



"Rock in the Glen," from which Glen Rock derives its name and around which streets had to be built, is one of recommended spots to be visited. Once used as Indian ceremonial site, 15 foot high boulder is now a war memorial.



Each twist in road of new skyline drive provides breath-taking changes of scenery and here's view looking eastward toward New York. On clear days Manhattan's towering buildings can be seen above dip in center background.



Still in use as a residence is "The Hermitage" in Hohokus, which was named after its builder, Capt. Philip De Visne, who was known as the "Hermit." House was the scene of the courtship of Aaron Burr and Theodosia Prevost, a widow.



View of dairy farm south of Pompton Lakes and map (below) of this week's tour.

